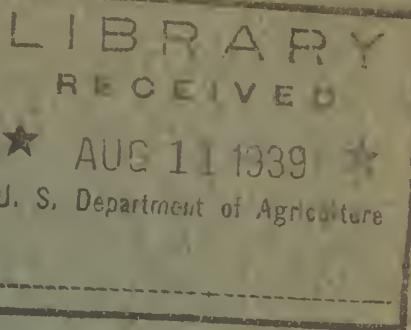


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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Region Eight
Albuquerque, New Mexico



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Regional Conservator

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON CONCHO

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The history of Concho is fairly short as Spanish-American towns go. About 1870 the grandfather of Manuel and Rosalio Candelaria settled on what is today the town of Concho. This Candelaria, after having been employed as an interpreter on a very profitable trading expedition to the Apaches and Navajos, both of which languages he spoke due to years of captivity with both tribes, decided to establish a permanent trading post in Apache country. He brought with him from Albuquerque a flock of sheep as well as an assortment of trade goods. Both his flocks and his trade flourished. As his sheep multiplied, it became necessary to employ herders. Since labor was not available in the vicinity, it was imported from New Mexico. Candelaria's herders settled around the store and founded the town of Concho.

The character of Candelaria's business began to change. As the Apaches were confined to a smaller area, the trading aspect of Candelaria's enterprises declined while his sheep holdings were increased. More herders were imported. Large New Mexico sheep companies began to range their sheep on the virgin land around Concho.

With the death of the founder, the business passed into the hands of his son Juan Candelaria. Since Juan Candelaria spoke no Apache and greater geographical distances now separated the Apache from Concho, the trading store became a kind of commissary for the herders in his employ. The sheep industry continued to grow until between 50,000 and 75,000 sheep were ranged around Concho.

Virtually, the entire population worked as sheep herders under the old partidario contract either as partidarios or as herders for partidarios. The contract called for the renting of a number of sheep to a herder who received no wage for his labor, but received 95% of the lambs. All of the wool and 5% of the lambs went to the owner. In addition, the partidario assumed all costs of the herding operation, agreed to return a herd of the same size and age as was rented to him and outfitted himself and his herders at the owner's store.

This system continued in effect at Concho until about 1929, at which time it was abandoned and a wage was paid to the herders. The reason for the abandonment of the partidario contract is not precisely clear. Mr. M. A. Candelaria attributes it to the decline of the sheep business and the ensuing consequence that partidarios were not able to make a living at the prices which lambs and wool brought after 1929. Inasmuch as this very price decline has been a cause of the persistence of the partidario system elsewhere, certain reservations may be entertained in this instance.

At present in Concho Mr. M. A. Candelaria estimates that there are only 20,000 sheep, 15,000 of which are owned by himself, and 5,000 of which belong to his brother, Rosario Candelaria. In approximately 10 years the number of sheep in the area has been diminished by 45,000. Two reasons are offered for this decline. The first of these was extensive overgrazing with the consequent depletion of the range. The second was a phase of the business

cycle. With rising prices and the vision of wealth just ahead, the sheep owners in Concho attempted a great expansion of operations. This resulted in recourse to commercial credit organizations to finance extended operations. However, as one of the former sheep owners remarked "The credit companies don't care about the sheep business." The result was that with a serious drop in prices mortgaged herds were immediately foreclosed leaving Manuel and Rosalio Candelaria as the only sheep owners in Concho.

Obviously, the drop in the number of sheep from about 65,000 to 20,000 has had serious effects upon a population which depended almost entirely upon sheep for support. In the meantime, the population has been increasing and with that increase has come increased human needs.

Supplemental forms of income became necessary for survival. The supplemental income that has developed comes from three principal sources:

1. At McNary, Arizona, about 35 miles from Concho, there is a large lumber mill. Although very few, if any, of the inhabitants at Concho are permanently employed by the lumber mill, occasional work is provided. The mill competes unfavorably with relief as a source of income. Theoretical wages are twenty-four cents an hour for a 10-hour day. However, the practice is resorted to of employing a surplus of labor so that the relief office estimates that the employees work about six hours a day for a

wage of \$1.44 a day. The occasional workers at the mill are boarded at \$1 per day. The net result then is a wage of forty-four cents a day. There is a presumption that an excess of labor is deliberately kept on hand because the \$1 per day that is paid for board, whether the employee works or not, is likely to be a fairly profitable operation. The inhabitants of Concho prefer relief to employment at the lumber mill, but relief regulations forbid.

2. At distances from 10 to 15 miles from Concho there are several large bean farms. For a period of 3 to 4 weeks at harvest time some work is available for the residents of Concho. The theoretical wage is \$2.50 a day. However, the wages are paid in beans at the rate of 50 pounds of beans at five cents a pound. If the worker desires to convert these beans into cash, he may do so at any of the three stores in Concho at $2\frac{1}{2}$ cents a pound. Here, also, relief is preferred, but again regulations require that a job in private industry not to be refused.

3. The most substantial supplemental form of income available to Concho is relief. At one time or another, during the past 14 months, 139 families out of an estimated population of 143 families have received relief. The amount generally ranges between \$20 and \$30 per month, depending on the size of the family.

The Candelaria family in the conduct of its sheep business may have as many as 15 permanent jobs available for

distribution and would, if these jobs remained permanently allotted to 15 individuals, accomplish the fairly permanent removal of 15 families from the relief lists. However, these jobs rotate quite rapidly and are used as a means of collecting otherwise uncollectable bills at the store. In consequence, relief has been considered necessary for all but four of the families at Concho.

PART II

FEUDAL ASPECTS OF CONCHO

Concho is usually described as a feudal town controlled by a single family. The family referred to is the Candelaria family. Since the death of Juan Candelaria, leadership of the family has descended to a son, M. A. Candelaria, and this section of the report will be concerned with an attempt to describe some of the mechanisms of control that are centered in the hands of the Candelaria family and its closely related branches, the Bacas and the Ortegas.

As was previously mentioned, all of the sheep at Concho are owned by M. A. and R. B. Candelaria. To this ownership of sheep attach certain prerogatives in the minds of a sheep herder population. One family owns all of the resources, the tending and development of which 140 families have made their life work. M. A. Candelaria occupies a position of benevolent paternity in the minds of the population, coupled with this is the ownership and control of virtually all of the grazing land in the vicinity of Concho. M. A. and R. B. Candelaria own or control an area of land running at least 50 miles north and south and at least a township east and west, thus rather effectually limiting the possibility of the development of a competitive enterprise in or around Concho.

Another dominant factor in the Candelarias' control of

Concho is the ownership of two of the three stores. The third store is owned by an outsider, Glenn Jacobs, who came to Concho two or three years ago with a carton of cigarettes and a box of candy and now has an enterprise which grosses about \$1000 per month and constitutes a threat to the supremacy of the Candelaria family in Concho. Virtually, all business is conducted on a credit basis at all three stores. Although it was not possible to determine price indexes for the stores, the inference is that the Jacobs store has somewhat more favorable prices. This inference is drawn from the fact that Candelaria's herders are paid in store orders rather than cash and Jacobs has conducted a certain amount of business with Candelaria's herders by taking in the store orders at 20% less than their face value. That is to say, that Jacobs gives \$4.00 at his prices on an order calling for \$5.00 at the prices at which the Candelarias sell. Jacobs then converts these store orders by purchasing flour with them at the Candelaria stores. Various attempts have ranged from threatening his customers with stoppage of relief to attempting to prevent the issuance of a liquor license (apparently indispensable to business success) to Jacobs.

The monopoly of grazing land by the Candelaria family is supplemented by an almost equal monopoly of house lots, agricultural land, and water rights. Eighty per cent of all agricultural land and house lots worked or inhabited by the people of Concho are owned by the Candelarias. In the townsite of Concho

where the bulk of the population is centered, out of 121 acres of land, to which ownership has been established, only 6 acres are owned by individuals other than the Candelaria families. One of these 6 acres belongs to the school. Although in most cases it is probable that no rent is collected as an actual or potential mechanism of control, this monopolistic ownership can be readily used.

The people at Concho are not farmers. They have always been sheepherders, and agriculture has never figured prominently as a source of income. There are 4 or 5 large farms of 25 acres or more, all of which are owned by the Candelarias and share cropped to people in Concho on a 50% agreement. However, each house has its small garden with from $\frac{1}{4}$ acre to 1 acre of land. The principal crops raised are chili, beans, and onions, and although the yield is low these crops represent an important supplement to native income. However, the relief worker in the area maintains that much of this agricultural produce finds its way to the producers' larder by a round-about route. When the produce is picked the stores present unpaid bills and take the produce in on account. The produce is taken in by the stores at the market price, which is always low at harvest time, to be bought back later by the producer after there has been a sizable price increase.

The town of Concho is very favorably situated for water. The Concho spring, which supplies the water for irrigation and drinking purposes, is permanent and its annual flow

has been determined to be sufficient to irrigate 2,200 acres of land. The Concho Irrigation Corporation was established in about 1895 and is controlled by the Candelaria family. Water rights are inalienable from the land and ownership of about 80% of the land in the area effectively establishes the control of the Candelaria family to the Irrigation Corporation. It is difficult to say to what extent and in what direction this control has been exercised. However, this much is known that the surplus water is diverted and used as stock water by M. A. Candelaria.

It may serve to clarify the situation somewhat if a rapid summary is given of the basic needs of the population and their major means of satisfying them.

1. A relatively small proportion of food needs are supplied directly through subsistence agriculture, and a share of the food produced in this way passes through the hands of the merchants. All other food requirements must be met through outside labor. the wages for which must be converted at the stores. Roughly, three-quarters of all food purchased is purchased through the Candelarias' stores.

2. All clothing obtained must be purchased. Again, three-quarters of the clothing will be bought from the Candelaria's.

3. Approximately 90% of the house lots and houses belong to the Candelarias, and tenancy of them depends directly upon the pleasure of the Candelarias.

4. Wood, which is almost exclusively the fuel of Concho, is relatively plentiful. Virtually, all of it comes from land owned by the Candelarias.

If we consider the introduction of WPA funds in the form of wages to Soil Conservation Service employees in the light of the above, one prominent fact will emerge. The wages, which are primarily designed for the benefit of the relief population in Concho, have 3 clearly marked paths to the Candelarias' door. First, through price increases and collection of delinquent accounts at the store. Second, through charging rent where none was charged previously. Third, through charging for wood where no fee has been exacted in the past.

This report cannot predict that these mechanisms will be employed. However, they are available for use.

If the desirability of relief funds being used for the benefit of a relief population is agreed to, it is worth pointing out that wages in themselves do not necessarily accomplish that result. Inasmuch as a subsidy is being made to the Candelaria family in the form of improvements that the Soil Conservation Service will make on the range, it is suggested that certain concessions from the Candelarias' in favor of the relief population be insisted upon. The Soil Conservation Service has bargaining power and the population of Concho none.

It is clear that the economic structure at Concho is not designed to provide the population with an adequate basis of

livelihood. If it is neither the desire nor the function of the Soil Conservation Service to Crystallize this situation, two questions arise:

1. It has been shown above that Soil Conservation Service work cannot be undertaken without direct subsidy to the Candelarias. Is it, then, desirable to undertake this work?

2. If the work is undertaken, is it possible for the Soil Conservation Service to insure the benefits that W. P. A. wages are designed to confer on the relief population?

With all the amelioration that the Soil Conservation Service may accomplish, it is reasonable to expect that the inadequacy of the economic structure will continue to result in a permanent relief problem at Concho. This aspect of the problem can be handled most readily by the joint activities of the Soil Conservation Service and the Resettlement Administration. There is, for example, a block of land about 500 acres in extent which could be readily irrigated and brought under cultivation. This land might be bought under the auspices of the Resettlement Administration for the people of Concho. It is believed that Mr. M. A. Candelaria might be prevailed upon to sell this land with all water rights at a low figure.

Meanwhile, it is recommended that the following ameliorative concessions, through the use of the Soil Conservation

agreement, be obtained from the Candelaria interests:

1. In no cases where rent is not currently paid shall rent be exacted for lot or dwelling.
2. The storekeepers shall agree not to exact payment on back debts.
3. The storekeepers shall agree to conduct cash transactions at a 10% discount over current prices.
4. The practice of permitting the residents of Concho to take wood from the Candelarias' land at no charge should be continued.

